

*Achieving a Positive Family Legacy:
A Statewide Summit on Fatherhood*
Central Connecticut State University, Alumni Hall Complex
August 8-9, 2019 * 9:00am – 4:00pm



***Dads Matter Too! CT FELT Team
CT Fatherhood Initiative
and
Central CT State University
HEALTHYFELLOWS/
Man Enough Support Initiative***

proudly present

***Achieving a Positive Family Legacy:
A Statewide Summit on Fatherhood***

**August 8-9, 2019
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This exciting event will convene state and federal leaders over two days to share information, learn from each other, identify action steps to further the work Connecticut is doing to support fathers and families and celebrate twenty years of father engagement efforts in Connecticut!

DAY 1: THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019

Registration 8:00 – 9:00am

Opening Remarks

**Federal and State Leaders' Panel Discussion:
*Fatherhood as a Critical Element to Family and Community Success***

**Findings from the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network Grant:
*CT Dads' Voices: Informing our Efforts***

Break

"Dear Dad" Tour: Video Shorts and Discussion

**Leaders' Remarks
The Fatherhood Connection to Other State Efforts**

Lunch

***CT Fatherhood Initiative* Strategic Plan:
Strategies Addressed and Next Steps**

CFI Awards Ceremony

Break

**Keynote Speaker: Doug Edwards
Highlighting Our Work - Where to Next?**

Creating My Legacy: A Young Father's Story

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DAY 2: FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2019

5th ANNUAL DADS MATTER TOO! FATHERHOOD CONFERENCE

Registration 8:00 – 9:00am

Welcome/Acknowledgements

**Viewing of the CT New Haven Based Documentary, *120 Years*
Q&A session with Scott Lewis and Stefon Morant**

Break

**Viewing of the Award-Winning Documentary, *Tre-Maison-Dasan*
Q&A session with Tre and Maison**

Lunch

Keynote Speaker: Maysa Akbar, Ph.D.

Workshop Session for Young Fathers in Attendance

Break

Comedic Performance by Kenny Blue

Closing Remarks

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REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

July 25, 2019 at 5:00pm

PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE AT

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/achieving-a-positive-family-legacy-a-statewide-summit-on-fatherhood-registration-64613045358>

Meals

Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Licensed Social Workers: NASW Continuing Education Credits (CECs)

An application has been submitted to the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. If you are interested in receiving CECs please indicate your interest and provide your license # where requested when completing the online registration.

Questions?

Please contact Diana DiTunno at

(860) 424-5997 or diana.ditunno@ct.gov

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CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)

The *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)* is a statewide collaborative effort of state and local partners focused on changing the systems that can improve fathers' ability to be fully and positively involved in the lives of their children. The Department of Social Services serves as lead agency for the *CFI* and partners include the Departments of Children & Families, Correction, Developmental Services, Education, Housing, Labor, Mental Health & Addiction Services, and Public Health; Office of Early Childhood; Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services, Court Support Services and Family Support Magistrate Divisions; Board of Pardons and Parole; CT Commissions on Children, Women and Seniors and Equity and Opportunity; CT State Colleges and Universities; CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence; UConn Human Development and Family Studies; UConn Health Disparities Institute; The Consultation Center at Yale University; CT United Way; Legal Aid Services, parents and numerous community-based agencies across the state serving fathers and families. Partners focus their efforts on four proven systems change strategies, including capacity-building in existing programs; infusing father-friendly principles and practices into existing systems; media advocacy to promote responsible fatherhood; and recommending social policy change to strengthen families.

The objectives of the *CFI* are to promote public education concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood; assist men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood; promote the establishment of paternity at childbirth; encourage fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of their children; establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status; and integrate state and local services available for families.

The focus of our efforts is the wellbeing of children. Our attention to supporting the active engagement of fathers is not to suggest that they play a more important role than mothers and is not intended to deny the irreplaceable parenting that mothers do. Providing supports to both parents directly benefits children. Our definition of "father" is expansive; it includes any man with biological, foster or adoptive ties, stepfathers, fathers-to-be, and men who have a paternal role in a child's life (boyfriends, fiancés, family friends, and so on).

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The Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (F.E.L.T)

Dads Matter Too!

The CT Department of Children and Families developed and implemented strategies for supporting work with fathers and their families. The overarching goal of *Dads Matter Too!* is to increase the involvement of fathers and families in Connecticut's child welfare system. The Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) is a team of dedicated individuals who are committed to increasing engagement of fathers and their families within all communities throughout the state of Connecticut. The Region 5 FELT has hosted multiple events/activities within their DCF region which consists of Waterbury, Danbury, & Torrington. Events have included the Dads Matter Too Community Awareness Day and Fatherhood 5k race, Community Trunk or Treats, Fishing Derbies, Listening Forums, Men 101 and Show Your Love fatherhood informational presentations, FELT Film & Food lunches, Father and Children Movie Nights, and the annual Dads Matter Too Fatherhood Conference held at Connecticut State University.

FELT goals are:

- for fathers and father figures, to become and/or stay involved in their children's lives;
- to promote awareness of the crucial role of fathers/father figures, and foster fathers in a child's life;
- to provide linkages for fathers to community providers and public services;
- to improve DCF's current service delivery to father; and
- to educate DCF staff and community providers to better serve fathers and their children.

The success of the Dads Matter Too Community Awareness Day and Fatherhood 5k in Waterbury's Library Park has grown since 2013.

Central Connecticut State University

HEALTHYfellows / Man Enough Support Initiative

Provided through CCSU Student Wellness Services, this campaign is a "MENrichment" and personal development program created to support the success of Central Connecticut State University college men. The campaign exists as a multidisciplinary health promotion initiative created as a vehicle to eliminate health disparities by improving access to information, resources, and wellness care services to young men. The campaign exists as a gender specialized support system dedicated to improving health outcomes.

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CCSU HEALTHYfellows/Man Enough Support Initiative, continued

The HEALTHYfellows/Man Enough Support Initiative campaign was created as a tool to help young men mature into healthy individuals while providing support resources to those working with them. The campaign focuses on facilitating conversations and dialogues where young men can safely learn, process, and organize (mobilize) outreach events. HEALTHYfellows will provide guidance and will promote wellness by encouraging young men to adopt lifestyle practices that will lead to optimal health and well-being.

Fatherhood Research and Practice Network Mini-Grant

In January 2019 the Department of Social services was awarded a state planning mini grant of \$10,000 from the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, and national project funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. The purpose of this funding is to enhance father inclusion in state programs and policies dealing with children and families. With the FRPN funds we seek to inform the current implementation of the CFI Strategic Plan, which was developed over an 18-month period (September 2013- December 2015) and launched December 2016. A research team from the University of Connecticut, Human Development and Family Studies Department, has conducted focus groups with fathers in communities across the state whose children or families are involved with state services. The focus groups will allow a true assessment of father-inclusive practices, policies and publications for which our state agencies (including the various court systems) strive. This valuable information will also inform leaders as to potential legislative proposals, collaborative opportunities and other next steps are needed to fully engage and support the fathers and families we serve. Findings will be shared on Day 1 of the Summit.

CFI's "Dear Dad" Tour

The *Dear Dad* Tour (Tour) is a video booth tour throughout the State of Connecticut collecting anecdotal stories from people like you. Stories about Fathers. Once the stories are collected, they are shared with the world in the hopes of drawing attention to the important role of fathers and the *CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)* which aims to strengthen that paternal relationship.

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CFI's "Dear Dad" Tour, continued

The Tour is a collaborative effort of the *CFI* partners and American View Productions (AVP), a native marketing and promotions agency located in Bridgeport. For 20 years the CFI has been changing the systems that can improve fathers' ability to be positively involved in the lives of their children. This public awareness campaign utilizes fatherhood stories to bring attention to the activities of the CFI while sharing compelling examples of why fatherhood is so important. Sponsored by several state agency partners, the Tour ran mid-May through mid-June; individuals shared stories about their fathers and/or themselves as fathers to inspire positive fatherhood. A compilation of the "Dear Dad Tour" video footage will be premiered on Day 1 of the Summit.

CFI Strategic Plan

In September 2013 the *CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)* partners began the development of a statewide strategic plan to strengthen the *CFI's* infrastructure and enhance its sustainability. The resulting Strategic Plan (Plan) outlines recommendations for short- and long-term strategies to address program, policy and system barriers to dads' engagement with their children, expand promising practices already being implemented, and establish new and strengthen existing partnerships at the state and local levels to support the result statements: "Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives" and, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children."

Fathers Count was chosen as the title for the Plan both because fathers are essential to the wellbeing of their children and because in Connecticut and most of the rest of the country fathers are not always counted in a way that acknowledges their critical contributions. *CFI* partners have long recognized that noncustodial fathers look a lot like the custodial mothers who access services through our systems; they have similar social service, educational, and employment needs. The domains for which partners have been working to address strategies recommended in the Plan include: fathers economically stable; fathers in healthy relationships; young people prepared to be responsible parents; men involved in the criminal justice system supported in being responsible fathers; policy/public awareness; and data development.

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CFI Strategic Plan, continued

Several critical considerations guide the *CFI* partners with the implementation of the Plan. Safe engagement of fathers with their children is a priority. We are promoting responsible fatherhood and recognize that not all men are ready for that role. For this reason, the issue of domestic violence must always be considered in our efforts. The *CFI* partners continue to recognize the importance of open communication between those seeking to prevent domestic violence and fatherhood practitioners. Since the inception of the *CFI* in 1999, the state's domestic violence experts have been partners in the provision of staff training, technical assistance, development of surveys for stakeholders, and facilitation of a cross-discipline stakeholders' forum to create dialogue and gather information regarding the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence. These experts continue to be critical partners, participating in the development of this Plan and the implementation work ahead of us, with a common commitment to eradicate violence in Connecticut's families.

Tre Maison Dasan

Tre Maison Dasan is an intimate portrait of three boys growing up, each with a parent in prison. Directly told through the child's perspective, the film is an exploration of relationships and separation, masculinity, and coming of age in America when a parent is behind bars. Following the viewing of the film, two of the children featured in the film, Tre and Maison, will participate in a question and answer session with attendees.

120 Years

120 Years tells the story of two fathers from New Haven, Scott Lewis and Stefon Morant, initially sentenced to 240 years in prison for a crime they did not commit in 1990. The film offers a glimpse into the lives of the individuals our criminal justice system leaves behind – and the extraordinary fight it takes to reverse their fates. Following the viewing of the film, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Morant will participate in a question and answer session with attendees.

Maysa Akbar, Ph.D.

Dr. Akbar, author of "Urban Trauma: A Legacy of Racism", will share insights on early childhood trauma, with a focus on urban and culturally diverse children, adolescents, and families. As an adolescent and child clinical psychologist, and Chief Executive Officer of Integrated Wellness Group in

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New Haven, Dr. Akbar's work is devoted to supporting children, adults, and families with their unique journey towards mental health and wellness.

Comedic Performance by Kenny Blue

Kenny Blue turned to comedy to cope with the loss of his daughter to intimate partner violence five years ago. He will perform on Day 2 of the Summit.

Breakout Session for Young Fathers

William Fothergill and CT Central State University students of the *Healthy Fellows Campaign* will deliver a breakout session for young fathers in attendance. This session focuses on young males with children between the ages of 1-5 years old and is dedicated to improving health and wellness outcomes for male students across the state of Connecticut and beyond. This workshop will serve as a link to local wellness, health, financial, and educational resources while supporting their intention to obtain a high school diploma and (or) a college degree, which in result, positively impacts parenting.